Why Buckle Up?

Seatbelts minimize the effects of vehicle crashes on the human body. In most crashes, there are two collisions. The first involves the vehicle striking an object, then buckling and bending until it comes to a stop. The second, the "human collision", is more costly and damaging. When the body strikes a hard surface, it comes to a stop within a very short distance. Because the hard surface has little give, the human body must absorb most of the force of the impact. Properly adjusted and fastened seatbelts distribute the forces of the rapidly decelerating body over a larger area, while stretching to absorb some of the force. In addition, belts hold the body in place while the car crushes and slows down.

Whether a person is belted or not often becomes the difference between life and death. While researchers may differ by a few percentage points either way, figures from seatbelt studies reveal:

- Seatbelts can reduce the number of serious injuries by 50 percent.
- Seatbelts can reduce fatalities by 40 to 60 percent.

Montana Seatbelt Facts

In the last five years, 1,063 drivers and passengers died in vehicle crashes on Montana roads. More than 70 percent – 751 people – were not wearing their seatbelts.

Single vehicle, run-off-the road crashes cause over 60 percent of the fatalities in Montana – most due to ejection from the vehicle.

During ejection, a person may be thrown up to 100 feet from the vehicle. Death results either from the blunt trauma of impacting the ground or other immovable objects such as a tree, or the force of the vehicle rolling over the person's body, or both.

Vehicles are built with a reinforced safety cage to protect the occupants in a crash. Within that cage is your best chance to survive – because there is "room to live" IF you stay in the vehicle properly buckled up.

With the ejection rate so high, we need to change the way we think about seatbelts.

Please buckle up and remind others to do the same!